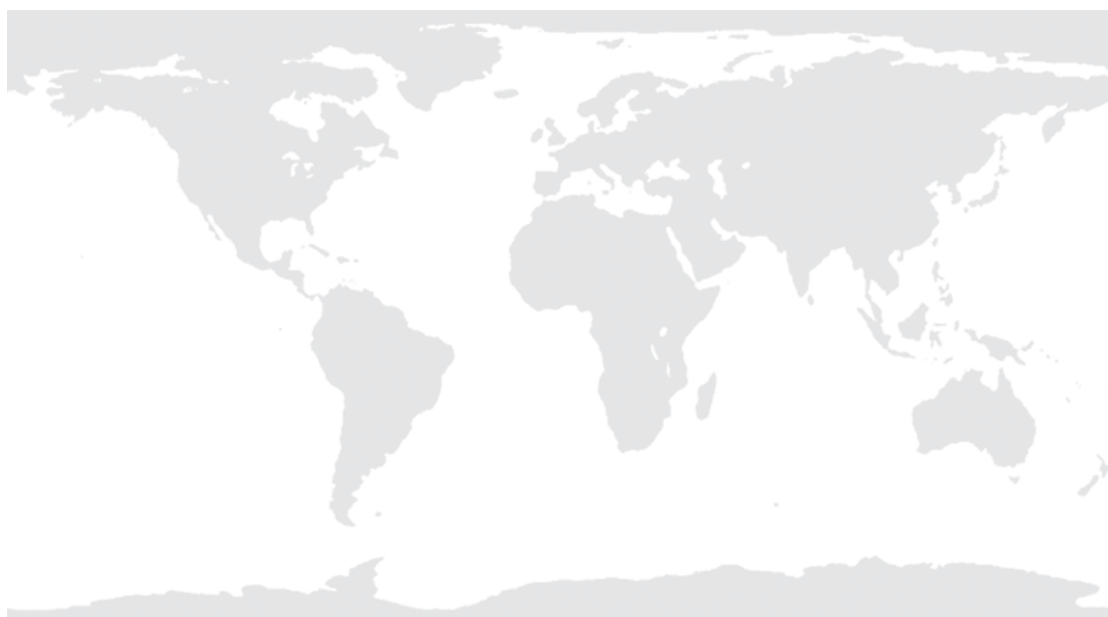




World Data on Education Données mondiales de l'éducation Datos Mundiales de Educación

VII Ed. 2010/11





Trinidad and Tobago

Revised version, June 2010

Principles and general objectives of education

To guarantee the kind of personal and social efficacy needed to sustain and improve the democratic way of life in Trinidad and Tobago, a guiding principle, imbuing educational efforts, is the view that all citizens, regardless of their gender, class, culture or ethnic origin, have the ability to learn and should be provided with the opportunity to develop that potential to the fullest. In other words, schooling is the preparatory stage which provides the means for continued learning and acquisition of skills to enable individuals to maximise their life opportunities. It is hoped that the education system will establish and maintain the ethical and moral values necessary for civilized interpersonal and inter-group relationships in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society.

The desired outcomes for all levels of the education system are based on the profile of the Twenty-first century Caribbean citizen, who is expected to:

- Be imbued with a respect for human life.
- Be emotionally secure with a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Regard ethnic, religious and other diversity as a source of potential strength and richness.
- Be aware of the importance of living in harmony with the environment.
- Have a strong appreciation of family and kinship values, community cohesion, and moral issues, including responsibility for and accountability to self and community.
- Have an informed respect for cultural heritage.
- Demonstrate multiple literacy, independent and critical thinking, question the beliefs of past and present and bring this to bear on the innovative application of science and technology to problem solving.
- Demonstrate a positive work ethic; and
- Value and display the creative imagination in its various manifestations and nurture its development in the economic and entrepreneurial spheres in all other areas of life. (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The law that still continues to guide the process of education in Trinidad and Tobago is the **Education Act** of 1966 and subsequent amendments. It is wide-ranging in scope and establishes overarching responsibilities such as the regularization of affairs between denominational and state schools, registration and operation of private schools, and the systematizing of the conditions of service for teachers.

The Act enshrines compulsory, free education for all children aged 6-12 in public schools. However, it does state that schools could also provide infant or nursery schools for children below 5 years of age. In fact, schooling begins for many



children around age 3, but they are mainly catered for in early childhood care and education establishments. At the other end of the compulsory age range, the reality is that free schooling continues for most of the secondary school population, until age 15. It is only because of a shortfall of secondary school places that compulsory, formal, free education comes to an end for some students at age 12. Free education means that students do not pay tuition fees but they do pay for books, school uniforms, and transport.

Compulsory schooling for children aged 6-12 is supported by labour legislation, which prohibits the employment of children who are under 12 years of age. The Minister of Education is empowered by the Act to appoint school attendance officers to enforce attendance and bring delinquent parents to heel.

The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) was established by the **Parliament Act No. 16** of 2004. The transition from a non-regulated to a regulated post secondary and tertiary education environment proved to be challenging for many institutions that were not in a state of complete readiness to meet the requirements mandated by the Act and outlined in ACTT's criteria and standards. Parliament subsequently amended the act, **Act No. 10** of 2008, to extend the grace period from four to five years, by which time (e.g. July 2009) institutions must be registered with ACTT.

Administration and management of the education system

The Education Act of 1966 vested a wide array of powers in the Minister of Education and the **Ministry of Education**. These administrative and management powers refer to all matters concerning the administering of educational policies at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and post-secondary levels; establishing and disestablishing of schools; the regulation and monitoring of private schools; the selection, allocation and placement of students; prescribing curricula, textbooks and other materials; the discipline and conduct of students and teachers; and, any other matters arising in the system. Within the Ministry, the **Curriculum Development Division** is in charge of curriculum matters.

With regards to tertiary level education, the Ministry of Education has responsibility for providing teacher training for secondary school teachers at the university, primary school teachers at the teacher training colleges, and for early childhood care and education teachers and/or caregivers. However, the **Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education** has the overall responsibility for all the other aspects of tertiary level education.

The **National Training Agency** was established in 1999 to coordinate and regulate technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The Agency works in consultation with industry experts, employers, training providers and professional bodies, to develop national occupational standards which clearly define the competencies which are required for effective workplace performance. The Agency coordinates, harmonizes, standardizes, monitors and evaluates the TVET sector through the establishment of a National TVET system. The Agency is in charge of the



implementation of the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) and the use of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) approved Regional Qualifications Framework.

The **Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT)**, established in 2004, plays a major role in facilitating quality assurance and accountability mechanisms across the tertiary education sector. ACTT's key functions include: accreditation and re-accreditation of institutions and programmes; recognition of foreign qualifications; and promotion of quality enhancement and quality assurance in tertiary education. ACTT also serves to facilitate the establishment of: a national qualifications framework that provides the basis for the creation of a seamless education and training system; criteria and guidelines for ensuring programme articulation and student transfers within the system at the national and regional levels; and to facilitate the free movement of skills within the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). ACTT conducts both institutional and programme accreditation.

Government-owned and controlled schools are fully financed by the state. Denominational schools (Christian and non-Christian) are provided with state subsidies and grants. These denominational or government-assisted schools co-exist with full-fledged government schools and private schools. The latter are owned and managed by private entrepreneurs, are not subsidized by the state, and unlike government and government-assisted schools, charge fees.

The White Paper on Education (1994) recommended that the Ministry of Education be restructured in order to develop a more facilitative and supportive capacity. Its operations should be decentralized into eight local educational divisions around the country responsible for school development initiatives via school-based management. Recently, the Ministry has embarked on a process of school-based management with the aim of providing government schools with greater autonomy, authority and support. A major component of school-based management (SBM) is the school development planning process. Such planning will occur through a system of committees established to facilitate collaborative decision making at the level of the school. These committees, however, will not stand alone. In this model of SBM, both the district and central administration are being equipped to provide greater support for the institutionalization of SBM in schools.

Local School Boards have been identified as a catalyst in this restructuring and decentralization process. Local school boards establish the vision for the community's schools that reflects a consensus of the board, community and district staff. Boards receive reports and other information about their school and promote the exchange of information between the school, parents and the community. Boards also report to the wider parent body and help improve parents' understanding of what the school is trying to achieve. Local school boards have been introduced at each government secondary school with the aim of improving student achievement and enriching the school environment; it is expected that local school boards will be introduced at the preprimary and primary levels. **Student Councils** have also been established at public secondary schools; and **Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)** implemented at the majority of primary and secondary schools.

District Offices, to be headed by an Education District Administrator, are being established to provide a wide array of services, including curriculum



implementation and student support services. The provision of offices and services at the district level, together with the provision of school level supports, provide a management framework against which an inclusive education system can be implemented. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

There are several bodies which are responsible for coordinating specific matters: the **National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education** (NCECCE), the Task Force on Special Education, the National Advisory Council, the Standing Committee for the Selection of Textbooks, and the School Nutrition Board. Other Ministries are involved in matters concerning education to varying degrees.

One of the responsibilities of the NCECCE is the introduction of appropriate legislation and administrative guidelines for the effective operation of all public and private ECCE centres. The Council, re-established in May 2002, is comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Health, Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs, the Office of the Prime Minister – Social Service Delivery, as well as other stakeholders such as SERVOL, The Child Welfare League, The Tobago House of Assembly, Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association (TTUTA), University of the West Indies, the Inter-Religious Organization and the National Parent-Teachers' Association.

The Ministry of Finance plays a significant role in regulating the personnel function of the education system. The Ministry of Public Administration, which has responsibility for reform in the public service, has begun to implement standards of performance and criteria of accountability amongst teachers and principals.

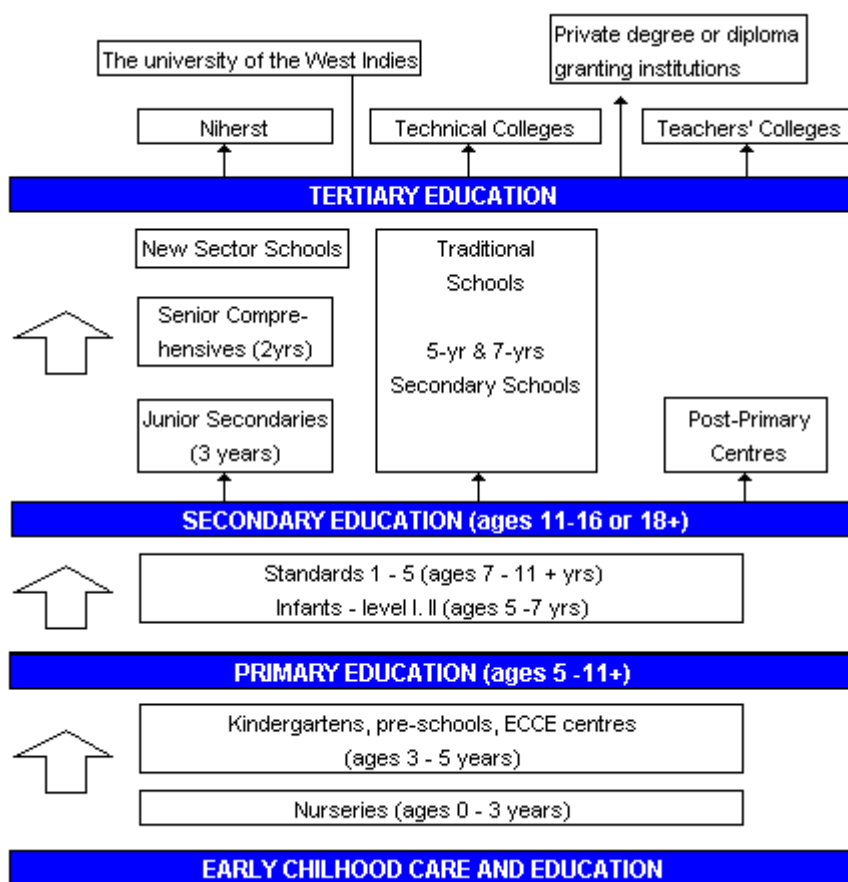
The Ministry of Labour coordinates the Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP) for out-of-work youth. Classes are usually conducted in schools after-hours when plant and equipment are idle. Basic skills are provided in a number of areas in an attempt to make the individual more employable or better able to open a small business.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are also involved in education. *Servol* (Service for All), in partnership with the Ministry of Education, is spearheading the expansion of the early childhood sector of the education system. They work with the disadvantaged and marginalized and provide training in a number of areas—technical skills, adolescent development, parenting and interpersonal relations. Other NGOs rescue and rehabilitate youth from alcohol and drug addictions, abuse of all kinds, homelessness and crime. They are Families in Action (FIA), New Life Ministries, the Living Water Community and others. FPATT (the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago) has advanced funds to the School of Education at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, to develop and implement a programme of Health and Family Life Education.

Private firms are also involved in education. Sponsorship for sporting teams and cultural groups, providing funds directly to schools for purchasing of expensive equipment, organizing competitions on debating, essay writing, posters on educational issues, community service or school-based projects, constitute the main ways they are involved.

Structure and organization of the education system

Trinidad and Tobago: structure of the education system



Pre-school education

Early childhood care and education (ECCE), is offered through a variety of facilities that accommodate children of different age ranges. Nurseries cater to the youngest, usually from a few months to 3 years of age, but they may accommodate older children as well. Preschools, ECCE centres and kindergartens are similarly organized and cater to children between the ages of 2/3 and 5 years. ECCE is not compulsory.

Primary education

Primary education is compulsory and usually begins at age 5, but in practice some infants are enrolled before then. The infants department of primary schools is divided into level 1 (ages 5-6) and level 2 (ages 6-7). Children then move to Standard 1 and progress over the next five years to Standard 5. At the end of Standard 5, pupils are eligible to sit the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) in order to obtain a place in secondary school.



Secondary education

Secondary education is free and in principle compulsory for all students who have passed the SEA. Secondary education is divided into two cycles: junior secondary, lasting three years (Forms 1 to 3); and upper secondary, covering Forms 4 and 5. Secondary education is offered by junior secondary schools (with pre-technical subject areas that focus mostly on the industrial arts), traditional sector schools (seven-year programme), modern secondary schools, new sector schools, senior secondary schools (main focus on academics and specialized craft areas), secondary comprehensive schools (Forms 1 to 6), and composite schools (Forms 1 to 5). At the end of Form 3, students sit the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE) Level 1 examination, implemented in 2006 and administered by the National Examinations Council. The NCSE Level 2 examination at the end of Form 5 is being implemented since 2007 in selected schools. Students can also sit the General Certificate of Education (CXC/GCE) Ordinary-level examinations or the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council.

Higher education

Post-secondary and tertiary level education is offered by a variety of institutions both public and private, including technical and teacher colleges, the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine Campus). At the post-secondary level, CSEC and GCE Ordinary-level holders can enrol in programmes leading to the GCE Advanced-level (two-year programmes) or CXC/Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE); programmes leading to the award of a certificate take one year to complete, while diplomas are awarded after successful completion of a two-year programme. The CXC/CAPE replaced the GCE A-level in 2006. Programmes leading to the award of a technician diploma usually take two years of study and some additional on-the-job training. At the tertiary and university level, programmes leading to the award of associate degrees last two years. The award of a teacher diploma requires two years of study; one additional year leads to the award of the certificate in education. Bachelor's degree programmes normally take 3 to 4 years to complete (5 years in the case of medicine and dentistry); a bachelor's degree in education takes three years (four years in the case of CSEC holders), and one additional year of study lead to the award of a diploma in education. Postgraduate programmes leading to the award of a diploma last one year, and master's degree programmes usually last two years. Postgraduate programme leading to the award of the title of doctor in medicine (MD) take three years to complete.

Both primary and secondary schools follow the same school year, which on average comprises 40 weeks. In secondary schools, it is usual to devote at least one week per term to internal examinations. In Form 5, teaching time is reduced in the final term to accommodate the sitting of qualifying examinations and this may start as early as mid-May. Thus, the Form 5 year may only comprise 33 weeks of teaching.

The educational process

One of the major goals of the education system is the establishment of a ‘seamless’ system, whereby students transit smoothly from one level to another. This system is premised on the notion of the student’s readiness to advance to the next level at each stage of the process so that by the end of the secondary cycle students should be prepared and fully equipped either to enter the world of work or to continue tertiary education, having acquired the requisite qualities, attitudes and aptitudes required for success in their chosen options.

The goal of the school curriculum is to have learners progress from one level to the next level in a seamless, continuous, coherent way through productive and meaningful experiences. Learning should be progressive and developmental. The continuum from preprimary to secondary education should provide signposts to point the way ahead and provide direction. It should link learning to assessment, the desired goals of the curriculum derived from national development goals and the national philosophy of education, while allowing for the pursuit of personal goals. Levels of sophistication should increase and tasks become more complex as students move through the continuum. While no one ideal curriculum will suit the needs of all individuals, the following principles should inform the national curriculum so that all children can have the maximum opportunity to develop their potential:

- The curriculum should reflect and support our national ideals and aspirations.
- It should be flexible and responsive to the developmental needs, life experiences and unique abilities of each individual.
- It should provide learners with the experiences, tools, resources and social structures to construct knowledge that is relevant to their needs and interests.
- It should empower learners to become agents of personal and social transformation.
- It should prepare learners and support their motivation for lifelong learning.
- It should be structured to allow goals to be achieved within a coherent, coordinated and integrated structure and framework.
- It should equip all learners with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to attain a good quality of life.
- All dimensions of knowledge that will support students’ development should be equally prized and utilized.

Since the 1970s primary education has undergone a number of curriculum changes. Content and learning experiences meant to be more responsive to the social and cultural experiences of students in Trinidad and Tobago, and to changing understandings about developmentally appropriate curriculum, have been included. In the last decade, the primary level curriculum has placed even greater emphasis on learning experiences that are developmentally appropriate, and reflect new understandings about effective delivery and assessment. In recent times also, renewed efforts have been made to institute promotion by attainment rather than by age and class. In addition, attempts have also been made to establish greater articulation



between the primary and secondary levels of the curriculum. However, significant variation among schools exists in the design and delivery of the primary curriculum.

At the secondary level, a major curriculum reform started under the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP). Based on the underlying principle that all students can learn, as well as to cater for the different learning needs and styles of students, the curriculum at both the primary and secondary levels is being revamped. These changes dovetail with the ECCE curriculum that is being developed and provide the linkages in the creation of a seamless education system.

Pre-primary education

Through exposure to early childhood care and education (ECCE), it is expected that 3- and 4-year-old children will:

- develop knowledge, skills attitudes and dispositions to enhance their physical wellbeing;
- acquire basic self-help and physical skills, both gross and fine motor;
- gain knowledge about the care of their bodies and maintain a desirable level of health and fitness;
- develop the dispositions to be learners – curiosity, independence, social responsibility, initiative, creativity, willingness to take risks, to ask questions and to persevere;
- acquire the knowledge, skills attitude and feelings they need to become effective communicators;
- gain an increasing understanding of themselves, their community, society and the world around them;
- develop self-worth and self-confidence in themselves as successful learners and the capacity to trust and respect others and self in a caring, nurturing democratic society;
- function as contributing members of their communities and society by developing effective social skills, and emotional competence: making choices that are fair, just, responsible and peaceful;
- acquire the skills they need to become intellectually empowered and successful learners – mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social inquiry and the ability to express their ideas through the use of technology;
- use tools, machines, materials and techniques to communicate, to learn new information, to create, to explore how things work and to solve problems;
- develop independence, self motivation and self expression in environments that stimulate aesthetic expression/creativity through music, dramatic play, dance and the visual arts;
- understand and respect social and cultural diversity.

The five curriculum strands (well-being, effective communication, citizenship, intellectual empowerment, and aesthetic expression) reflect the desired outcomes for children to grow up as competent and confident lifelong learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to their democratic communities and



society. The National ECCE Curriculum Guide, launched in 2006, is the outcome of the efforts of the working committee, and its development was a shared process based on collaboration with international regional and national partners. Its development was also informed by research based on current theories, lessons learnt from participation in international and regional conferences and study tours. The Guide was also designed in recognition of the importance of teachers, families and communities and the collaborative role that is required to nurture young children towards the ideal and awaken their genius through the encounters they will experience on a daily basis in their homes and in ECCE centres. (Ministry of Education, 2006).

The Curriculum Guide does not seek to provide a rigid structure for the delivery of content but clarifies, explains and provides guidelines that inform practice and the context for implementation. It will therefore facilitate curriculum planning for 3- and 4-year-old children, as it will guide ECCE teachers in creating environment; selecting appropriate materials; using effective strategies; guiding children's behaviour; working effectively with parents adapting to the special needs of children and families; and allowing continuing incorporation of new ideas from current research in child development and early childhood education.

The framework is based on a knowledge of child development (how children grow and develop emotionally, socially, cognitively, physically and morally/spiritually); a respect for the unique qualities of each child in the context of her/his family and culture, and an understanding of how children think and learn. It delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, the strategies used by teachers to achieve these goals and the context in which learning and teaching occur. The new child-centred curriculum is characterized by creative and constructive activities that seek to develop children's knowledge, understanding and skills in areas including personal, social and emotional development; language and literacy; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; life skills; mathematical concepts; creative development; and spiritual and moral development. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Several terms for early childhood centers are in use: a) kindergarten, preschool, and early childhood (ECCE) centers are used interchangeably; the terms refer to similar programmes catering to children 2-5 years of age; many settings offer after-school care to accommodate parents; b) nursery schools may offer the same programme as kindergartens, preschools, and early childhood centers, but may admit children younger than 2 years of age; the daily schedule may be flexible to accommodate working parents; c) nurseries and day care centers admit children 0-5 years of age; d) early childhood center is a term used for center-based care and education of children under 5; e) laboratory preschool: the University of the West Indies Faculty of Education owns and operates such a facility for children 2 ½ to 5 years of age; what makes this facility different from other privately owned early childhood centers is its focus on research, teacher training, and production of indigenous didactic materials; it is also a center for experimentation with curriculum methods; f) the interdisciplinary child development center offers care and an educational program for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who have been referred by social services; children who are at-risk are given priority.



Historically, early childhood educational services were supplied by a host of private establishments. The government has only recently become involved. *Servol*, an NGO long established in provision of this service, has been given overall responsibility to run the public ECCE centres. It operates under the aegis of the NCECCE (National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education) responsible for monitoring all centres, both private and public.

In 1995 the World Bank reported that whilst all public ECCE programmes were similarly administered (following *Servol*), private establishments were likely to vary considerably. On average for both types of centres, the child/adult ratio was 11:1. The average time spent on the classroom activities was as follows: nine hours devoted to pre-academics activities (numbers, mathematics, story telling, language); nine hours for personal care (self sufficiency, social activities); three hours for expressive activities (singing, painting); and two hours of free time. (World Bank, 1995).

The private sector continues to dominate the provision at the pre-primary level. In 1992 there were 682 private-run establishments catering to 20,408 children with a total teaching staff of 1,600, the majority of whom were female (1,576). In 1995, there were 148 public establishments catering to about 4,500 children. In 2004, there were 167 public ECCE centres with an enrolment figure of 7,000 children. Altogether, the Ministry of Education was responsible for 929 public and private ECCE centres serving 27,462 preschoolers. In 2007 there were 963 ECCE centres, with a total enrolment of 29,685 children.

ECCE is not compulsory. The fact that privately-owned centres far outnumber public centres, leads to much variation in daily hours of opening and closing. Children on average spend twenty-eight hours per week at a centre. Pre-schools, kindergartens, and ECCE centres tend to model their school year on that of the primary and secondary sector—about forty weeks. Nurseries catering to younger children may open longer. Fees are charged by both types of centres.

Primary education

Primary education serves to ensure the transmission of culture and values, deepen cognitive and social development, and prepare pupils with literacy and numeracy skills to successfully pursue a quality secondary level programme. Primary education is compulsory and usually begins at age 5 although some infants are enrolled before that age.

As mentioned, the infants department of primary schools is divided into level 1 (ages 5-6) and level 2 (ages 6-7). Children then move to Standard 1 and progress over the next five years to Standard 5. At the end of Standard 5, pupils are eligible to sit the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) in order to obtain a place in secondary school.

In the primary school, all subjects are compulsory, except in certain instances of religious instruction. Subjects chosen for inclusion have to be approved by the Ministry of Education, which has the final, overall responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum.



In the infants department, a teaching period is twenty minutes long; in Standards 1-2, it is thirty to thirty-five minutes; in Standards 3-4, it is thirty-five to forty minutes; and in Standard 5 and post-primary classes, the length of the period may be forty to forty-five minutes. For Standard 5, the average number of weekly hours of teaching by discipline, based on a forty-minute period a week, is as follows: mathematics (three hours and twenty minutes); reading—includes silent reading and word building (three hours and twenty minutes); language arts—includes grammar, spelling, vocabulary, literature, and comprehension (three hours); creative writing (one hour and twenty minutes); social studies—includes family life, geography, history (three hours); science—includes general science, agricultural science and food and nutrition (three hours); and creative arts—including physical education, dance, arts and crafts, music and drama (three hours and twenty minutes).

The school day runs from 8:30 to 14:30 in the case of infants, and to 15:00 for the rest of the school. The teacher or the school can arrange the subjects according to their particular contexts, once they observe the stipulated times per subject per week.

Recent initiatives in the area of curriculum development and delivery at the primary level include: a) the review and revision of the curriculum in the subject areas of mathematics, language arts, science, social studies and physical education; and b) the development of a strategy and implementation plan for the introduction of Spanish as the first foreign language. This is all within the context of the development of an integrated curriculum for children in the early primary grades to ensure a seamless transition from the early childhood to the primary level.

Literacy is considered one of the basic/chief skills to be acquired at this level; and the degree to which pupils acquire this skill has long been a subject for local and international research. The value placed on acquisition of this skill is indicated by the stipulation by the Curriculum Division of the Ministry that 30% of school time for younger pupils should be devoted to the teaching of reading. This amounts to an average of 292 hours per school year. For pupils in the two final grades, the time spent on reading may decrease to approximately 175 hours per school year.

A large portion of national testing concentrates on assessment of pupils' literacy skills. The Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), the terminal primary examination which determines placement at the secondary level comprises three papers, two of which (language arts and creative writing) are measures of pupil literacy; the other subject is mathematics. 'Language arts' is also one of the main subjects examined in the third and fifth primary years through the National Test. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

One main aim of inclusive education is the gradual integration of special education services into mainstream education. Any separate special education should be aimed at preparing students for education in the general school system. The concept of inclusion accepts that students learn and use their learning differently. Inclusion is an effort to ensure that students with special educational needs attend schools along with their siblings, friends and neighbours, while also receiving the specially designed instruction and support they need to succeed as learners and to aspire to achieving the highest possible standards. Inclusion refers to the opportunity for persons with special educational needs to participate fully in all of the educational,



employment, consumer, recreational, community and domestic activities that typify everyday society.

The Student Support Services Division was established within the Ministry of Education in 2004. The main foci of this Division are: addressing the needs of all students, especially vulnerable students and those in difficult circumstances, providing diagnostic and prescriptive services, guidance and counseling, social work and special education services.

In 2005 the Ministry started a project for the complete establishment of student support services, with full implementation expected by the year 2015. While the first phase saw the strengthening of the support systems in selected primary schools, the second phase seeks to develop support services at the early childhood level, at additional primary schools and selected secondary schools. These services include: expansion of guidance and counselling at the secondary level; expansion of support services at the primary level schools through the provision of on-site school social workers, special education teachers, guidance officers, special education resource aides and hearing interpreters; expansion of off-site services for students with severe emotional and behavioural problems; reparation of students from special schools for mainstreaming at regular schools and the preparation of regular schools for children with special education needs; continued early identification and intervention of students with special education needs at ECCE centres and primary schools; sensitization and outreach of education personnel to inclusive education. The groups identified for particular concern are as follows: dropouts, students with learning or other disabilities, students who are gifted and talented, students infected or affected by HIV, students with social, emotional or behavioral difficulties, ESL students (English for speakers of other languages), that is, students not fluent in the language of instruction. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Universal access to primary school education has been achieved since the year 2000. In 2004, the enrolment figure was 136,374 pupils in the 481 public primary schools. In 2007 there were 548 government, government-assisted and private schools with a total enrolment of 133,692 pupils.

Transition from primary to secondary education has since the introduction of free secondary education in 1961 been determined by performance at the CEE. In 1994/95, 29,851 pupils in the public primary schools sat the CEE and 20,065 were placed, indicating a transition rate of 69.2% for boys and 66.1% for girls (CSO, 1997). As mentioned, the CEE has been phased out and replaced by the SEA.

Secondary education

Since the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in the year 2000, secondary education is free and in principle compulsory for all students who have passed the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA). Unplaced students may either continue in post-primary classes or enter the secondary system through private secondary schools where they pay fees.

There are two sectors in secondary education. They are commonly referred to as the traditional and the new or alternative sector. Private secondary schools are

classified as traditional. In the traditional sector, consisting of five- or seven-year schools, a general academic education is offered in the disciplines. These schools are normally attended by those students who score the highest on the SEA. The curriculum is designed for those wanting to go on to higher education or to employment at the clerical level in the traditional workplaces.

In the alternative sector, a two-tier system operates where students, usually those who have not scored highly on the SEA, are placed in junior secondary schools (Forms 1 to 3). From here students go on to senior comprehensive schools for the next two years. Newer versions within this sector include secondary comprehensive schools which are senior comprehensive schools converted to five- and seven-year schools, and composite schools which are five-year schools situated in sparsely populated rural areas and follow a curriculum similar to that in junior secondary and senior comprehensive schools. The students in this sector may follow an academic curriculum but the emphasis is on pre-technician subjects and industrial arts.

There are two cycles in secondary education. The first cycle (Forms 1–3) is assessed by the National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE) examination, adopted to streamline and monitor achievement in the middle years of the secondary school. The junior secondary schools operate a double shift per day: 7:30-12:00 and 12:30-17:00.

Based on a thirty-five-period week where each period is forty-five minutes long, in the 1990s the typical weekly lesson timetable was as follows:

Subject	Hours per week
English	3h45m
Mathematics	3h45m
Modern languages	1h15m
Social studies	1h15m
Technology studies	3h45m
Integrated science	1h15m
Aesthetics (arts and crafts, music, physical education)	3h45m
Personal and social development	1h30m
Additional language or English literature or religion or science	1h15m
Assembly	0h45m

In 1999, the Secondary Education Modernization Programme (SEMP) was initiated, with the following objectives: a) the reform and expansion of the secondary school system that will result in five years of high quality secondary education for all the nation's children regardless of social and/or economic status; b) the creation of a curriculum that is relevant to the very demanding and dynamic world of work; and c) the development of teaching technologies that will produce graduates who can adapt



to the rapid changes being brought about through technological advances and globalization.

As a result, changes in the secondary school curriculum have been made to provide young people with flexible appropriate learning opportunities and life skills development to enable them to face the new challenges of the twenty-first century, all within the context of the holistic development of the individual into a well rounded, balanced citizen of the country who is capable of being productive and achieving his/her fullest potential. It is anticipated that students would achieve the essential learning outcomes of aesthetic expression, citizenship, communication, personal development, problem-solving and technology competence. By engaging in these core subjects, students would also achieve foundational skills such as numeracy, literacy and research skills as well as core work skills such as teamwork, learning to learn skills, safety competencies and basic manipulation skills. Further, a Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) programme has been introduced, designed to promote psychosocial competence in children and youth by teaching them life skills, which are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour.

The Ministry of Education has identified six essential learning outcomes which help to define standards of attainment for all secondary school students – aesthetic expression, citizenship, communication, personal development, problem solving, and technological competence. Curriculum design therefore facilitates the attainment of these learning outcomes, and prepares students for further study or for entry into the world of work. The national curricula should also provide all students with the maximum opportunity to develop their potential and should therefore reflect and support our national ideals; be flexible and responsive to the developmental needs, life experiences and unique abilities of each individual; provide learners with the resources to construct knowledge that is relevant to their needs and interests; and equip all learners with the knowledge and skills to attain a good quality of life.

In the area of curriculum development and delivery, the major initiatives being pursued at the secondary level include: a) revision and implementation of the new curricula for Forms 1 to 3, in eight core subjects: mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, Spanish, visual and performing arts, physical education, technology; b) revision of curricula for Forms 4 and 5 in all subject areas; c) development and distribution of curriculum and teachers' guides; d) development and implementation of Caribbean Vocational Qualifications Programme; e) upgrade, outfitting and overall modernization of school facilities to facilitate the effective delivery of revised curricula, particularly for specialized subjects such as technology and visual and performing arts.

New curricula for Forms 1 to 3 have been developed, tested and revised; and curricula for Forms 4 and 5 were completed and are now being implemented at the secondary level. These new curricula comprise three novel designs as follows: a) the modular format, which responds to learners' needs for self-paced learning; this format allows students to complete each module at their own pace, and facilitates assessment at the end of each module; b) the strands format, which aligns the reading, writing and listening skills at increasingly difficult levels per strand; the assessment for each strand effectively profiles the learner on the completion of each strand, allowing for accurate identification of weak areas thus facilitating targeted remediation; c) the



skill-based format, within which the student is trained alongside an occupational skills-based profile to fit a specific occupation upon graduation; the general broad base of the curriculum also allows the student to go further in educational training. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

The promotion rate from lower secondary to upper secondary is 100%. This is because the NCSE is not a selection device. Part I of the NCSE focuses on the middle school years. The purpose of the NCSE is to provide all students with a comprehensive testimonial of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they have developed from active and successful participation in a programme of academic, vocational and aesthetic education designed to cater to their varying abilities, interests and aspirations. Previously, the five years of secondary school were assessed by a terminal exam sat in Form 5 (CXC/GCE) which catered to only 40% and 20%, respectively, of the secondary school population. Consequently, large numbers of adolescents left school each year without any type of certification.

The second cycle of secondary education covers Forms 4 and 5. Schools in both sectors follow a seven-period day where a period is forty to forty-five minutes long. In most schools, periods are shorter in the afternoon session. Schools begin at 8:00, sometimes earlier, and usually dismiss at 14:30. In the traditional sector, students may offer six or seven academic disciplines to be examined by the regional body of CXC (Caribbean Examinations Council) or the Cambridge General Certificate of Education (GCE) O-level, at the end of Form 5. The average number of hours per week, if a forty-minute period is observed and seven disciplines are being offered, will be three hours and twenty minutes per discipline.

In the new sector, there are a smaller number of classes offering the traditional disciplines and students usually register for about five for examinations. The pre-technician curriculum stream caters to a larger number of students and includes some combination of the following—business studies, office procedures, typing, information technology, accounts, computer literacy and technical drawing. These subjects are examined at the end of Form 5 by the CXC and GCE bodies. Technical-vocational or industrial arts subjects are also offered to a large number of students and include combinations of the following subjects: auto mechanics, machine shop, welding, masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation, air conditioning and refrigeration, electronics and home management. These subjects are examined by the local National Examinations Council.

Throughout secondary education, English and mathematics are compulsory. However, in new sector schools more time per week is devoted to these subjects—approximately four hours and forty minutes each. The other subjects may be offered for an average of four hours each per week. In addition, there are on-going efforts in new sector schools to incorporate other subjects as core curricula—e.g. aesthetics, human and social development, entrepreneurship, and sport activities. Such efforts are envisaged as having potential in addressing the needs of these students who are often low achievers and considered to be at risk.

Seven-year secondary schools, which may be either in the traditional or new sector, continue on to sixth form and offer post-secondary education to the 17-19 years age group. Sixth form is divided into lower and upper sixth and takes two years



to complete. Students become eligible for sixth form if they obtain full certificates (i.e. five passes) at CXC/GCE. However, because of limited places, schools select those students with the best profiles. Mainly disciplines are offered and are examined by the Cambridge Advanced-level Examination. The normal practice is to offer three subjects and the General Paper, which is compulsory. The average number of weekly hours of teaching by discipline is six hours, and, for General Paper, two hours and twenty minutes.

Sixth-form students usually intend to pursue tertiary education. In 1997/98, the regional examining body of CXC introduced the CAPE (Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination) which was intended to eventually replace the GCE A-level. This new examination brings academic, technical and vocational courses of study within a single system certification. Not only do students interact with a syllabus more relevant to their context, but the CAPE also expects to widen the base of persons becoming eligible to pursue higher levels of tertiary education by ensuring that this programme is offered in all institutions of higher learning. In 2006 the Ministry of Education adopted the CAPE programme as a unified system of certification. This move away from the traditional system of accreditation reflects the Ministry's vision to provide quality education for young people in non-traditional areas, so they can adapt to the changing needs of the labour market both locally, regionally, and in the wider global economy. CAPE core subjects include: Caribbean studies, communication studies, functional French, functional Spanish, information technology, and statistical analysis. These are subjects that educators across the region agree are fundamental for providing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that people need for study at the tertiary level and the world of work.

Vocational training is delivered by a diversity of public and private suppliers who offer different levels of qualification and certification. The National Training Agency (NTA) was established in 1999 to coordinate and regulate technical and vocational education and training (TVET), promoting and facilitating a coherent system of quality TVET. This system is designed to satisfy the changing needs of industry as well as cater to the aspirations of individuals in pursuit of their career goals and opportunities. The Agency works in consultation with industry experts, employers, training providers and professional bodies, to develop national occupational standards which clearly define the competencies which are required for effective workplace performance. The Agency has identified occupational standards in several industry sectors (data processing technology, food, beverages, industrial instrumentation, welding, etc.) and national vocational qualifications and has credited several training suppliers.

The Ministers of Education of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have adopted a regional education and technical training strategy, recommending to establish national training agencies in order to obtain coherent national systems and with a wide participation of the private sector. Starting from this process, Jamaica (1990) and Barbados (1993) established similar national agencies, that have attempted to coordinate their actions by means of the Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA), that has brought about in reference to the development of Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ). The CVQ is available in several occupational areas including agriculture, business, communication, construction, energy, health and manufacturing, at two levels: level 1: entry level, semi-skilled,



apprentice, supervised beginning worker; and level 2: independent, skilled worker. It allows for flexible articulation within the general education system as well as a smooth transition to the world of work.

The NTA is in charge of the implementation of the CVQ and the use of the CARICOM approved Regional Qualifications Framework. In 2009 the NTA has established a National Curriculum Development Team made up of curriculum experts from key training institutions and providers. The Team is entrusted with the responsibility to develop a model for curriculum development and instructional design for TVET in Trinidad and Tobago. The intention is to ensure that content is available, updated and closely aligned to local industry performance requirements, as well as, international best practices in education and training.

The Trinidad and Tobago National Vocational Qualification (TTNVQ) is a competency-based qualification which is developed from the National Occupational Standard; the TTNVQ is going to be replaced with the CVQ. The TTNVQs are based on national occupational standards for top performance defined by industry experts; these standards are then translated into the curriculum and assessment procedures developed to encompass the standards identified. All TTNVQs fit into a TTNVQ framework. There are five levels: level 1 (the lowest), pre-craft; level 2, craft; level 3, technician; level 4, professional; and level 5, chartered and advanced professional.

In 2004, enrolment in the 133 public secondary schools was 106,637 students. Furthermore, to sustain its commitment to USE, the Ministry of Education also purchased school places for 7,766 secondary students at private institutions, as there were insufficient places at the public secondary schools. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, in 2007 the gross enrolment rate at the secondary level (all programmes) was estimated at 86%.

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

The National Test is an annual standardized examination covering the subjects of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. The objectives of the examination are to: gather information for decision-making at the school, district and national levels; identify areas of the system that require further investigation; compare students' performance by school and educational districts; track students' progress through school.

All Standard 1 and 3 pupils are required to sit the National Test in mathematics and language arts, while with effect from 2008 Standard 2 and 4 pupils will be tested in science and social studies. Results from these examinations are used to provide data for making decisions and developing strategies intended to improve educational output at the school, district, and national levels. Prior to inception of the National Test, pupils were tested only at the end of the primary cycle for placement at the secondary level, and too late to facilitate intervention for pupils found to be in need.

Pupils' performance is currently analyzed according to educational district, gender, school type; and is amenable to further analysis according to socio-economic status at the level of the administrative district, teacher qualification, and intervention



by the Student Support Services Division. The results of these examinations indicate areas of weakness in curriculum design and pedagogy; as well as the number of pupils at risk, thus providing a basis for policy development and reform. The average score of individual schools is also used to determine the levels at which intervention should take place, the need for remedial teacher training, placement of auxiliary staff, and qualification for a broad spectrum of interventions.

The Ministry has commenced the implementation of a restructured Continuous Assessment Programme (CAP), which integrates ongoing or continuous classroom assessment into the teaching and learning process, both at the primary and secondary levels. The CAP is designed to influence the quality and style of teaching and learning in the classroom; inform on students' readiness for the next level of learning and facilitate a smooth transition through the system; and promote diagnostic remedial and preventative intervention when necessary. In addition, an Operational Manual was developed for teachers to promote good teaching and assessment practices aimed at improving students' learning.

At the primary level, some 10-12% of pupils annually score 30% or less at the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA), the results of which are used for placement at the secondary level. In order to address this issue of poor performance, a continuous assessment system was instituted for early identification of pupils at risk in order to facilitate remediation. The National Test, best described as an annual summative assessment integral to the CAP at the primary level, seeks to track students' progress in school, identify areas of academic weaknesses and gather information for decision-making at the school, district and national levels. Administration of these examinations early on in children's careers enables remediation since reports are sent to schools as well as to the educational districts, and corrective programmes are organized at either the school or district level under the direction of the School Supervision and Curriculum Divisions. Teachers are provided with training and strategies to counteract identified areas of weakness. Schools may also organize their own remedial programmes. In conjunction with the Student Support Services, individual education programmes (IEPs) may be developed for individual pupils.

The National Certificate of Secondary Education (NCSE) at the end of Form 3 is a new system of certification designed to address the problem of students leaving school without full certification after five years of secondary education. The NCSE certificate will provide, for all secondary school students, a comprehensive testimonial of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have attained from active and successful participation in a programme of academic, vocational and aesthetic education and co-curricular activities. The programme utilizes a combination of continuous and summative assessment which is more sensitive to the varying interests, abilities, needs and learning styles of the student population. This type of assessment responds to the modernized national curriculum which is now in place, providing education in eight core subject areas.

Results of the SEA are also used to assess pupil performance and as an indicator of the need for further interventions at the secondary level. Since this examination is also used to assign students to secondary schools on the basis of merit (e.g. students with similar scores are placed together), it is also an indicator of the need of individual schools for remedial staff. At the secondary level, student



performance at the NCSE and the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), are also used to inform policy and to indicate the need for additional resources.

The learning outcomes of students leave much to be desired as evidenced in the performance of students at the SEA and CSEC Examinations. At the CSEC level, results for the period 2002 to 2007 indicate a general decline in pass rates in English, falling from 64.4% passes in 2002 down to 52.8% in 2007. In mathematics, for the same period pass rates range from a low of 41.2% in 2005 to a high of 51.1% in 2002.

At the international level, in the 1990s Trinidad and Tobago was a participant in the IEA Reading Literacy Survey. Results of this survey indicated below average performance levels for Trinidad and Tobago pupils. Further, the participation in the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Survey (PIRLS) which examined the reading literacy skills of the 10-year-old age cohort also indicated low achievement levels. Trinidad and Tobago's average scores were below the PIRLS international mean of 500 in every category examined, with an overall average of 436 points. These findings were similar to pupils' performance at the language arts National Test (in 2005, 64% of pupils scored at or below the Basic Level). (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Teaching staff

In order to teach at a primary or secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago, a person must first obtain a Teacher's Registration Number. Once registered, the person can then apply for employment as a primary or secondary-level teacher at any government or private school. The qualification (e.g. certificate, diploma, associates degree, bachelor's or master's degree) depends on the level of entry at which the teacher begins

A person interested in obtaining a Teacher's Registration Number must meet at least one of the following criteria: a) have a minimum of five O-level subjects at CXC (General Proficiency) Grades I, II or III inclusive of English language, mathematics and one subject from the natural sciences group; b) have a minimum of five O-level subjects at GCE Grades A, B, or C inclusive of English language, mathematics and one subject from the the natural sciences group; or c) have a qualification from an accredited university or higher education institution. Technical-vocational teachers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and their requirements vary.

The regularization of qualifications for teaching at early childhood care and education (ECCE) centres has been undertaken. The preschools run jointly by the government and *Servol* train teachers on-the-job. The School of Education at the campus of the University of West Indies also offers in-service, part-time courses leading to a Certificate in ECCE. However, there continues to be many untrained teachers, particularly in the privately-owned preschools.

Primary school teachers are required to be in the system for at least two years, before they proceed to two years of compulsory, in-service training at the teacher



training colleges. Most teachers in the primary system have been trained at this initial level. The award of a teacher diploma requires two years of study; one additional year leads to the award of the certificate in education. A bachelor's degree in education takes three years (four years in the case of CSEC holders), and one additional year of study lead to the award of a diploma in education.

All teacher training courses address, at varying levels of depth and exploration, the foundation areas in education—the psychology, philosophy and sociology of education, as well as language issues in education. Training for primary schools is designed to deliver some measure of content in the different subjects and in areas of specialization. Such areas in the Certificate of Education programme include mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, integrated arts, the art and science of coaching and educational administration.

The Diploma in Education programme is offered in mathematics, language arts, modern languages, social studies, science, and educational administration. Training for both primary and secondary schools emphasize the practice of education in classrooms. The School of Education also offers a Master in Education (M.Ed), a two-year part-time degree programme, designed for teacher educators, school principals, administrators and supervisors. Courses are offered in the foundation areas as well as teacher education, curriculum development and materials production. M.A. (Ed.) and Ph.D. degrees are also available, where the emphasis is on research in the education system.

The Ministry of Education has established the Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT). The centre was set up to provide innovative leadership in inspiring, empowering and equipping teachers in the first three grades of primary schools, in particular to improve the teaching of reading. In order to ensure continued professional development of teachers, CETT will also train teachers in the latest and best evidence-based strategies of teaching and reading and will engage them in the best practices.

Teachers' workload varies according to the level of schooling and type of school. At the primary level, teachers work on the average about thirty hours per week in the classroom. At the secondary level, teachers' workload varies from approximately twenty-two hours per week spent by junior secondary teachers in classroom activities, to seventeen weekly hours spent by senior comprehensive teachers. It is estimated that teacher's workloads may be higher in the public and private denominational secondary schools than for public government secondary schools.

In 2004, there were 2,223 teachers at the pre-primary level, 7,839 in primary schools, 5,422 in secondary schools, and 1,720 in tertiary level institutions.

New standards for teacher education, professional development and performance are being established with a view to achieving high quality instructional delivery and improved student performance. The Ministry of Education is engaged in reforming the current system of teacher recruitment and selection aimed at ensuring that teachers possess both academic and pedagogic qualifications. The Ministry has therefore collaborated with the University of Trinidad and Tobago and other



stakeholders, and developed and implemented pre-service undergraduate programmes in education for teachers and educators. In addition, the Ministry conducts continual training to re-skill and equip incumbent teachers to deliver the curriculum in a manner that is responsive to the needs of learners. (Ministry of Education, 2008).

The *Survey of mathematics in primary schools 2007*, carried out by the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and focusing on Standards 1 to 5 teachers, showed that the majority (71%) of primary school teachers reported the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC)/O-level as their highest educational attainment in mathematics and a similar percentage (69%) had a teacher's diploma as the highest professional qualification. Over 90% of the teachers in the public primary schools were professionally qualified while one-quarter (26%) in the private primary schools held no such qualification. In addition, only 8% of primary school teachers were in possession of the B.Ed. degree, the stated qualification goal for all teachers. Approximately one-third (30%) of the teachers in the private schools was less than 30 years of age compared to 2% in government and 16% in government-assisted schools.

The *Survey of mathematics in secondary schools 2006*, carried out by the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, and focusing on Forms 1 to 4 teachers, showed that of the sample of teachers engaged in teaching mathematics, 28% held a first degree in the subject and only 16% graduated in mathematics and also obtained professional qualification. About 57% graduated in various fields of study, mainly in mathematics (28%) and natural sciences (11%), and 33% possessed an A-level qualification. About 40% of all teachers in the sample were professionally qualified mainly with a diploma in education (19%) and a teacher's diploma (11%). The largest proportion (35%) of the sample of mathematics teachers reported service of less than five years while 30% indicated teaching experience of 15 years and over.

References

Alleyne, M. *Nationhood from the schoolbag: a historical analysis in Trinidad and Tobago*. Washington, DC, Interamer, OEA/OAS, 1996.

Campbell, C.C. *Colony and nation: a short history of education in Trinidad and Tobago*. Kingston, Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 1992.

Campbell, C.C. *Endless education: main currents in the education system of modern Trinidad and Tobago*. Kingston, Jamaica, Ian Randle Publishers, 1997.

Central Statistical Office. *Report on education statistics, 1994-95*. Office of the Prime Minister, CSO Printing Unit, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1997.

Ministry of Education. *Draft strategic plan, 1992-1997: success through renewal*. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1992.

Ministry of Education. *Public primary schools (1994-1995)*. Education Planning Division, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1995.



- Ministry of Education. *Essential levels of learning—primary level*. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1995.
- Ministry of Education. *Quick facts on education, 1992-93*. Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 1996.
- Ministry of Education. *National Report on the Development of Education in Trinidad and Tobago 2004*. 47th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2004.
- Ministry of Education. *National early childhood care and education curriculum guide*. Draft version, April 2006.
- Ministry of Education. *National Report on the Development of Education in Trinidad and Tobago 2004*. 48th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneva, 2008.
- Mohammed, Jennifer; Keller, Carol. *The education system in Trinidad and Tobago*. Document prepared for the International Bureau of Education, October 1997.
- St. Bernard, G.; Salim, C. *A study of the findings of the national literacy survey in Trinidad and Tobago*. UWI, ISER, 1995.
- Steward, L.; Thomas, E. *Teacher education in the Commonwealth: Caribbean issues and developments*. London, Commonwealth Secretariat, 1996.
- UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Global Education Digest 2009: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*. Montreal, UNESCO:UIS, 2009.
- University of the West Indies. *Official statistics, 1995/96*. Office of Planning and Development, The Vice Chancellery, Mona, Jamaica, 1996.
- White Paper. *Education policy paper, 1993-2003*. National Task Force on Education, 1994.

Web resources

- Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago: <http://www.actt.org.tt/> [In English. Last checked: June 2010.]
- Ministry of Education: <http://www.moe.gov.tt/> [In English. Last checked: June 2010.]
- Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education: <http://www.stte.gov.tt/> [In English. Last checked: June 2010.]
- National Training Agency: <http://www.ntatt.org/> [In English. Last checked: June 2010.]



For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>